

## Analytical Writing Instruction

Analytical writing is an especially important kind of writing to include in our K – 12 schools because it is often called for in post-secondary education, the workplace, service to the community and country, as well as in students' personal lives. The mental skills involved in analytical writing help students develop as critical thinkers and as learners. The communication skills developed through analytical writing help students solve problems, extend our understanding of subjects, and make changes that can benefit our society. Considering the long-term benefits of this kind of writing for students, it should be done across the curriculum in our schools. Kentucky's *Core Content for Assessment and Program of Studies* identify three categories of writing for our schools: writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning to the teacher, and writing for authentic purpose and audiences in realistic forms. Analytical writing may be done in all three of these categories. It may be done in many forms and may concern virtually any topic or subject. Many possibilities, thus, are available for analytical writing in our schools. Teachers are encouraged to engage students in writing that is analytical in nature.

These important points deserve emphasis:

- Analytical writing can be appropriate for Kentucky's Writing Portfolio. Though students may write analytically in works submitted for the personal, literary, and reflective categories, this kind of writing lends itself well especially to transactive writing.
- Analytical writing that is Portfolio-appropriate certainly may focus on academic subjects, though analytical writing is not restricted to academic subjects.
- Portfolio-appropriate analytical writing may be based on inquiry and may include reference to sources; however, the writing must also include the student's idea development for a justifiable/realistic purpose; must be written with awareness of readers beyond the teacher alone; and must be written in a realistic form.
- Though this brief discussion is intended to draw attention to analytical writing, such writing is not a "new" kind of writing available for instruction or assessment. It has been included in schools for many years, and it has been an option for Portfolio-appropriate writing from the beginning of our use of this form of assessment.
- Though analytical writing is especially important for students at the secondary level, students in the elementary and middle grades also can begin to develop their skills in analysis and in writing analytically.

Examples of Analytical Writing Appropriate for the Writing Portfolio:

- An article on *A Tale of Two Cities* analyzes the work in terms of the author's use of archetypes. Such an article approximates writing published in academic journals in many content areas. Of course, students may submit their articles for publication in appropriate journals, but teachers and students also may create classroom journals as an authentic means of promoting better understanding of academic subjects among learners in the discipline. In developing such articles, student writers will demonstrate awareness of authentic and critical readers.
- A report prepared for a bank analyzes conditions surrounding the bank building and offers recommendations for landscaping.

- A text for a speech in a social studies class analyzes voter apathy and strives to persuade students to help address this problem.

Following is a sampling of approaches often taken in analytical writing. The approaches may be modified for younger students. The list is not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive; other options certainly are available. Whatever analytical approach is taken, it is important to emphasize that writers establish a justifiable reason for conducting the analysis—a reason, need, “So What?” for the writing. The writer analyzes in order to bring about a better understanding of something. In some cases, the analysis is a means of supporting a thesis, controlling idea, conclusion, interpretation, request for action, plan, etc.

- Raise and address a significant question about a subject.
- Evaluate how well something works or will work for a particular purpose.
- Compare/contrast to accomplish a justifiable purpose.
- Identify and discuss cause and effects or influences.
- Form and support predictions.
- Explain relationships—how one thing contributes to another or to the whole.
- Discuss important connections in order to clarify something.
- Interpret the importance of a set of events.
- Examine techniques used in a product or performance, presenting ideas about their importance.
- Investigate a problem, helping readers understand the nature of the problem and sometimes presenting ideas about ways to solve it. Identify and discuss forces influencing a problem, issue, condition.
- Present and interpret particular evidence to support a conclusion, thesis, position.
- Explain reasons for an outcome, problem, condition, etc.
- Determine needs and explain/propose ways to meet those needs.
- Investigate conditions and present recommendations to meet goals, change the conditions, etc.
- Describe how something developed.
- Examine components, aspects, elements, features of something to draw conclusions about its nature, meaning, importance, etc.
- Discuss data/information gained from a needed investigation and draw conclusions.
- Identify and discuss forces contributing to a condition, problem, outcome, etc.
- Discuss features or components of something that have been misunderstood or overlooked.
- Examine qualities of something to explain its nature or to answer important questions about it.
- Divide something into parts and discuss how the parts relate to each other or how they contribute to the whole, as well as why what is revealed is important.
- Examine the interaction of different elements of something; discuss the importance of understanding the interaction.
- Identify/discuss a goal and explain ways to reach the goal or argue for certain/different ways to reach a goal.
- Identify conditions, trends, behavior, ways of thinking, etc., in order to clarify and alert readers to a problem.
- Isolate and discuss particular features that play an important part in the make up of something.

- **Discuss principles that explain the nature or make-up of something. Discuss principles that explain how something came about.**